

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAGU 04507 202029Z

54

ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5558

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 4507

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NU

SUBJECT: REACTION TO QUITO MEETING

SUMMARY: NICARAGUA REACTION TO QUITO MEETING HAS BEEN
SUBDUED, REFLECTING DIFFICULTY OF GETTING FIRM GRASP ON INCONCLUSIVE
RESULTS. FOREIGN MINISTER WAS DISPASSIONATE ABOUT MEETING IN PRESS
CONFERENCE AND HYPER-REALISTIC IN PRIVATE.

1. THE INCONCLUSIVE NATURE OF THE QUITO MEETING APPEARS TO
HAVE IMPEDED LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MEETING FROM SIGNIFICANTLY
HARDENING OR POLARIZING. WHILE THE MEDIA HAS BEEN GIVING FULL
COVERAGE TO THE CRIES OF ANGUISH AND GLOOM EMANATING FROM OTHER
LATIN AMERICAN CAPITALS, WE FAIL TO DETECT ANY GENUINELY SIMILAR
SENTIMENTS AMONG INFORMED NICARAGUANS.

2. THE OPPOSITION, REPRESENTED BY LA PRENSA, HAS ATTEMPTED,
ALBEIT HALF-HEARTEDLY, TO RIDICULE THE GON'S ABSTENTIONIST VOTE,
TERMING IT UNIMAGINATIVE AND A MERE APING OF THE U.S. HOWEVER,
THE PAPER REPORTED FOREIGN MINISTER MONTIEL'S PRESS
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PAGE 02 MANAGU 04507 202029Z

CONFERENCE ON THE SUBJECT ALMOST STRAIGHT, FURTHER REFLECTING THE

DIFFICULTY OF GETTING A POLITICALLY USEFUL ANGLE ON THE MEETING.

3. THE ONLY VIGOROUS OPINION ON EITHER SIDE THUS FAR HAS APPEARED IN THE SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES WHERE A REGULAR COLUMNIST PRAISED THE WORK OF THE CONFERENCE FOR REJECTING THE SPREAD OF CASTROISM IN THE HEMISPHERE. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED WERE PRESUMABLY COLORED BY THE FACT THAT THE WRITER IS A CUBAN EXILE.

4. IN LINE WITH THE GENERALLY LOW-KEY REACTION TO THE MEETING, FOREIGN MINISTER MONTIEL IN HIS NOVEMBER 16 PRESS CONFERENCE WAS DISPASSIONATE AND DIDACTIC IN HIS TREATMENT OF THE MEETING. HE SAID THAT NICARAGUA HAD NOTHING AGAINST CUBA PERSONALLY OR IDEOLOGICALLY, SINCE IT HAD NOT BEEN THE OBJECT OF SERIOUS CUBAN INTERVENTION FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND INDEED NICARAGUA APPRECIATED CUBA'S ASSISTANCE AT THE TIME OF THE 1972 EARTHQUAKE. NICARAGUA'S ABSTENTIONIST POSITION WAS BASED SOLIDLY UPON A DESIRE TO SEE THAT THE TERMS OF THE RIO TREATY REGARDING THE REPEAL OF SANCTIONS WERE CARRIED OUT CORRECTLY. HE DENIED THAT THE U.S. HAD APPLIED ANY PRESSURE ON NICARAGUA. HE ALSO REFUSED TO ACCEPT THE ASSESSMENT THAT THE CONFERENCE RESULTS WERE A TRIUMPH FOR CUBA, ARGUING THAT THE MEETING COULD JUST AS WELL BE CONSIDERED A SUCCESS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE CONTINUED DETERMINATION OF THE OAS TO PREVENT CUBAN INTERVENTION. FINALLY, MONTIEL AVERRED THAT ALTHOUGH NATIONS COULD OBVIOUSLY DO WHAT THEY PLEASED REGARDING CUBA DESPITE THE OAS, NICARAGUA WOULD ALWAYS RESPECT OAS RESOLUTIONS UNTIL THEY WERE LEGALLY ALTERED OR THE OAS ITSELF DISAPPEARED. NICARAGUA, HE SAID, WILL NOT HAVE ANY RELATIONS WITH CUBA UNTIL THAT TIME.

5. IN A PRIVATE CHAT WITH CHARGE A FEW DAYS LATER, MONTIEL WAS ALMOST NONCHALANT TOWARD WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED AT QUITO AND ITS REMIFICATIONS. WITH A SHRUG OF HIS SHOULDERS, MONTIEL CLAIMED THAT MEETING PROVED NOTHING ABOUT STRENGTH OF INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM WHICH WAS NOT KNOWN ALREADY: THERE ARE IDEOLOGICALLY DIVISIVE ISSUES ON WHICH CONSENSUS IS USUALLY IMPOSSIBLE. THE QUITO MEETING NEITHER SHARPENED NOR AMELIORATED THIS PROBLEM; IT MERELY RATIFIED IT. REGARDING RESTRUCTURING THE OAS, MONTIEL STATED THAT THE TPE OF REORGANIZATION CURRENTLY BEING BRUITED ABOUT CONCERNED ITSELF MORE WITH THE COSMETICS OF PATCHING UP EMBARRASSING CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 MANAGU 04507 202029Z

DIFFERENCES AMONG THE MEMBERS THAN WITH MAKING THE ORGANIZATION MORE EFFECTIVE. HE CONCLUDED THAT THE OAS IS IMPOTENT IN ANY MATTER WHERE STRONG POLITICAL DIFFERENCES EXIST AND IS LIKELY TO REMAIN SO.
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